A Summary on Iman According to Various Groups

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A Brief Summary Defining Iman in Accordance to Ahlus-Sunnah and the Various Other Groups - Old & New

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Defining *Iman*:

Linguistically it carries the meaning of *tasdiq* and *iqrar*. He (*ta'ala*) said: "...but you will never believe us...", meaning: *bi-musaddiq*.[1]

There occurs a disagreement in defining *iman* legally (*shar'an*):

1. The *madhhab* of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah is that *iman* consists of statements, actions, and beliefs. And this is by the consensus of the Salaf. "I consulted a thousand *'ulama*," al-Bukhari said in his book *Khalq Af'al al-'Ibad,* "all of them said: *iman* consists of statements and actions."

2. The *madhhab* of the Jahmiyyah. They are also referred to as the *ghulat* (extremist) Murjiah. *Iman* according to them is *ma'rifah* and *'ilm* (both refer to knowledge) only. They do not enter within the definition of *iman* anything else. So whoever recognizes Allah and has knowledge of Allah, then [to them] he is a believer with perfect *iman*. Ibn Battah mentioned this school of thought of theirs in his book *Al-Ibanah al-Kubra*; ibn Taymiyyah also referred to them in his *Al-Iman*; Abu Ya'la in his book *Al-Iman*; Abu 'Ubayd in his book *Al-Iman*; and Abul-Hasan al-Ash'ari mentioned it in his book *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* where he mentioned the beliefs of the Murjiah. The implication of their speech is that Iblis is a believer because he knows Allah; and it implies that Fir'awn, and Quraysh, and Abu Talib are from the people of *iman* - because they had knowledge of Allah (*ta'ala*). They are referred to as the extremist Murjiah due to this reason.

3. The *madhhab* of the Karamiyyah. *Iman* according to them is merely a statement of the tongue. They do not enter *tasdiq* [within *iman*], only knowledge along with the statement; so whoever knows Allah and said with his tongue to the word of *tawhid*, then he is a believer. They say that

[1] It is difficult to truly translate this subtle difference. Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah (*rahimahullah*) said, "It is known that *iman* [linguistically] is *iqrar* and not merely *tasdiq*. *Iqrar* contains and comprises the statement of the heart, which is *tasdiq*, as well as the action of the heart, which is *inqiyad*." (ed.)

the *munafiq* is a believer. This is clear from their speech as they say: *la ilaha illallah*, and in the *Akhirah* they are *kuffar*, while in the *dunya* they are believers. They are second in rank vis-a-vis extremism (*ghulu*) after the Jahmiyyah.

4. The *madhhab* of the Asha'irah. They are Murjiah vis-a-vis the topic of *iman*. Their view is close to that of the Jahmiyyah, even though they are better than them in terms of phrasing. They join knowledge with *tasdiq*; they said: *'iman* is knowledge and *tasdiq*.'

5. The *madhhab* of the Maturidiyyah. They are a group from the Murjiah. Their school states that *iman* is knowledge coupled with *iqrar* and *tasdiq*. But like the Asha'irah, they do not place actions within the description of *iman*.

6. The *madhhab* of the Murjiah al-Fuqaha. Their school in relation to *iman* states *iman* is a statement and *tasdiq* coupled with some actions of the heart like love, glorification, and the absence of belittlement. Thus *iman* [to them] is a statement, a belief, and some actions of the heart. When speaking about the pure Murjiah in his book *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin*, al-Ash'ari mentioned this about them; ibn Taymiyyah also related it in his book *Al-Iman*.

7. The *madhhab* of the neo-Murjiah (and entering within this are the modernists in general). *Iman* according to them is knowledge, *iqrar*, and *tasdiq*, as well. They do not enter actions in the description of *iman*. But within this faction are many who do enter action within the definition of *iman*. However, actions are not a condition [to them] but merely a condition for its perfection. And they do not declare *takfir* due to action, either. Disbelief (*kufr*) according to them is only (declaring something forbidden to be permissible (*istihlal)* and belying (*takdhib).* Thus when *kufr* takes place from a person, or actions that the texts indicate are *kufr*, they do not declare *takfir* of him until he expresses with his tongue

istihlal or *takdhib*.

8. The *madhhab* of the Khawarij and Mu'tazilah. *Iman* according to them is a statement, action, and belief like the *madhhab* of the Salaf except they define action to be every act of obedience, meaning: all actions of obedience are a condition for *iman* and one disbelieves if it is left. While according to the Salaf from actions are those that are considered a condition and one disbelieves if they are left; and from them are those considered to obligatory and one is disobedient if he leaves them; and from them are those that are considered recommended. See *Al-Iman* by Abu 'Ubayd and *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* by al-Ash'ari.

9. As for the neo-Khawarij today, they declare *takfir* of the people (Muslim communities) without elaboration or wholesale that applies to all individuals with no expections made for anyone. Some of them don't declare mass *takfir* but instead refrains [from giving one the ruling of Islam] and investigates the one who outwardly shows Islam today until his islam is clear to him.

10. As for the rulers and secularists today concerning *iman*, it is *salah*, *hajj*, and fasting. But in relation to politics, *jihad*, commanding good and forbidding evil, *da'wah*, issues of women, education, society...all of it is not from *iman* [according to them]. Rather, it is extremism and terrorism... In regards to the extremist secularists like the communists and modernists, they do not recognize the very foundation of the *din*. May Allah destroy them all and curse them with a mighty curse.

These are the schools of thoughts of the people concerning *iman*.

أهل التوحيد

Publications